New York City School Library System Office of Library Services

Exploratorium – May 18, 2011 NYC Department of Education

**Title:** LMC21: Powering Up Libraries for the 21st Century

**Audience level:**  All

**Presenter:**

Linda Williams Bowie

Astor Center for Public School Libraries at New Visions for Public Schools

320 West 13th Street, 6th Floor

New York, New York 10014

Library Web site: www.newvisions.org

E-mail: lbowie@newvisions.org

**Description, Goals, Intended Outcomes:** **The *Library Media Centers for the 21st Century*** initiative (LMC²¹) was designed to help high school campuses of small schools overcome the challenges of their shared libraries as older, cramped, outdated facilities lacking in 21st century technology or contemporary design by creating innovative, model libraries for 21st century learning. This initiative launched in the fall of 2007 was a collaborative effort between the Astor Center for Public School Libraries at New Visions for Public Schools, NYC Department of Education School Library System, the architectural firm diDomenico + Partners and the New York City School Construction Authority to help campus communities re-imagine their campus libraries. The campuses identified to participate in the intensive campus-wide visioning and participatory design process were campuses serving the New Visions PSO and had received capital funds(RESO A funding) for library renovation from their New York City Councilmen and Borough Presidents.

The overarching goals of the initiative were three-fold:

1. To develop cutting edge campus library media centers that meet the diverse instructional needs of multiple schools in a shared building,
2. To foster deeper collaboration among campus schools through the redefinition of a shared space, and
3. To use design to build student excitement about literacy, inquiry and learning.

The LMC21 initiative empowers school leaders, librarians, teachers, students, parents and community partners to see themselves as library advocates and change agents.

**Process to Develop and Implement This Project:**

Working with the campus or school Library Advisory Council (LAC)the 4 participatory design sessions, took place over approximately 4-6 months, and helped campuses of schools re-envision their libraries into cutting edge 21st century library media centers. The LAC members including the Principals, library media specialist, selected teachers, parents and students from the campuses slated to undergo renovation or refurbishment, with funds from NY City Council RESO A, participated in sessions designed to help them rethink their libraries as school centers of inquiry, instruction, learning and technology. The LAC participants engaged in a process resulting in a plan of how the renovated shared school library would look and operate. From these planning sessions and the participatory design process the campus stakeholders approved a renovation design of their facility as well as used their new understandings to build a school library media center that supported and fosters literacy, inquiry, technology and information access for all students in their schools.

**Evidence of Outcomes, Possible Adaptations, Lessons Learned:**

* The Library Advisory Council is a critical campus wide group that will help build campus wide communication and guarantee each school has a voice in the planning, programs and services of the campus library.
* The leadership of a campus librarian can be the most important component of the success of a school/ campus library as they seek to bridge the many relationships on their campuses and provide equitable and high quality services to all students on the campus.
* A project of this nature and magnitude is a multiyear program which benefits from staffing and personnel continuity and persistence in realizing a vision even when other supports and changes occur and end.
* School library renovations in older school buildings in NYC schools are expensive endeavors that require the creative thinking of many to open up innovative funding streams.
* Current school/campus libraries are in great need of infrastructure changes that include extensive wiring upgrades and commitments to providing our students with the latest in technology and digital upgrades if we are serious about our students being career and college ready for 21st century jobs.
* Campuses without librarians and uninformed administrators did not realize their renovations. It was clear through the LMC21 process that without the expertise and knowledge of a librarian on the campus even minimal work did not get done toward driving a renovation.
* projects of this nature can and have made a difference in entire school communities and impacted whole school cultures.
* the visionary design process created a common platform for engaging teachers to think critically about their instruction, student learning and information literacy skills learned through using library resources.
* a project like this is a true teaching and learning collaboration for a school.
* ongoing and persistent communication among key players can move and facilitate the process.
* new partnerships are created between teachers and librarians based on library activities in the newly renovated libraries which impact and build students information literacy skills.
* teachers are important partners in advocating for a new library.
* one unsupportive and uncommitted principal on a campus can potentially kill the entire project, thus calling for the need for principals sharing a building to find common ground.
* Collaborating with varied groups and partners via LAC’s, with all focused on creating a new library pushes up against institutional thinking and practices, which can and did advance the understandings of what a 21st century school library can become.